

critical digest

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Openings This Week

Madeline Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault Company-Ziegfeld, 11/12/52. Limited run repertory by French group. Les Fausses Confidences and Bantiste open first double bill. Successing bills include: Le Procès, Amphitryon, Les Fourberies de Scapin, Occupe-Toi D'Amelie, La Repetition d'Amour Pami and Hamlet. Presented by S. Barak with cooperation of the French government.

Digests of Current Reviews - more on back page

The Deep Blue Sea-Morosco, 11/5/52. Margaret Sullivan's return to Broadway after an eight year absence was welcomed by all daily critics, but reviewers split on merits of Terrence Rattigan's script produced by John C. Wilson and Alfred de Liagre, Jr. Sheaffer, Eagle, raved. Coleman, Mirror and McClain, Journal American, thought star's performance outshone uneven script. Frith Banbury, who also directed the London hit production was credited with a fine staging job by most, while Alan Webb, Herbert Berghof and the rest of the cast were credited with outstanding performances. Atkinson, Times, agreed with those who aren't ready to accept the author's premise, the result seemed rather trite. Kerr, Herald Tribune, placed part of the blame on the star's failure to convey the deeper emotions required. Watts, Post, feared present performances were not as ideal as those in London version he okayed. Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, thought failure due to either Sullivan's not being challenged enough by script or by author's writing of a psychological play about a physiological situation. Most critics admitted, pro or con, star was a box office magnet who would keep vehicle going for months.

The Climate of Eden, Martin Beck, 11/6/52. Diverse views filed on Moss Hart's adaptation of Edgar Mittelholzer's novel. "Shadows Move Among Them," presented by Joseph Hyman and Bernard Hart. Chapman, News, and Watts, Post, praised all departments in unusual fascinating drama, well acted and imaginatively conceived. Penelope Munday, Rosemary Harris, John Cromwell and entire cast were cheered. Frederick Fox's set was billed as superb. Times and Herald Tribune critics noted some interesting scenes but found end result unmoving and unconvincing. Both placed partial blame on Lee Montague's shallow performance. Coleman, Mirror, panning entire production stated that self-conscious sex can be boring. McClain, Journal American, blamed excess of plots. Hawkins, WT&S, noted script had some faults also. Dissenters liked scenes with youngsters better than main plot.

Out of Town Tryouts

The Seven Year Itch, Courtney Burr and Elliott Nugent production of new comedy by George Axelrod which debuted in Hartford, Conn, will be a Broadway hit, predicts Eck, Variety... "Dramatic translation" of John Brown's Body, presented by Paul Gregory with Tyrone Power, Judith Anderson and Raymond Massey, is perfect for one nighters, but Brog, Variety, considered it doubtful for stands in single cities. Hollywood opening was perfect.

News & Notes

New York Compass suspended November 3rd, presses sold at auction to cover a chattel mortgage...Mr. Pickwick closed...In Any Language returns to Monday curtain at 8:40 PM... November ANTA Forum "Are Critics Undermining Theatre?" features Chapman, News; Rice, Post and Thomson, Herald Tribune...Fifteen more policemen assigned to Times Square area to speed up show traffic...Lotus Club honored Rodgers and Hammerstein at dinner.

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' NYC THEATRE INDEX '
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D - Daily	W - Weekly	M - Monthly	B - Broadcast
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DT - NY Times	DJC - Journal of Commerce	WCM - Chr Science Monitor
DH - NY Herald Tribune	DWJ - Wall Street Journal	WC - Commonweal
DN - NY News	DWW - Women's Wear	WCU - Cue
DM - NY Mirror	WB - Billboard	WN - Nation
DC - NY Compass	WV - Variety	WNR - New Republic
DP - NY Post	WCD - Critical Digest	WNS - Newsweek
DJ - NY Journal American	WGN - George Jean Nathan	WNY - New Yorker
DW - NY World Tele-Sun	WWM - Ward Morehouse	WSR - Saturday Review
DB - Brooklyn Eagle	BC - WCBS Leonard	WT - Time
DL - L.I.Press	BL - New Leader, WEVD	MP - Park East

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. Pro means the critic stated directly that he recommends show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

BEATRICE LILLIE-10/2/52	PROS: 100% RAVE NOTICES
BERNARDINE-10/16/52	PROS: 13 CON: DP DB DWD DJC DWJ WB WV
	NONE: DL WWM BL WCM WC WN WNR MP WSR WGN
DIAL M FOR MURDER-10/29/52	PROS: DT DH DN DM DC DP DJ DW DWJ WV DJC WB WCD WNY WCU
	WT WNS
THE FOUR POSTER-10/24/51	PROS: 19 CON: DH DP WGM WWM BL WC WNY
	NONE; DWJ WN WNR WSR
GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50	PROS: 29 CON: WN
THE KING AND I-3/29/51	PROS: 29 CON: WN
IN ANY LANGUAGE-10/8/52	PROS: DJ DB WNS WB DWW BC
	CON: 16 NONE: DL WGN BL WCM WSR MP WN WC
THE MALE ANIMAL-4/30/52	PROS: 27 NONE: WGN WNR MP
THE MILLIONAIRESS-10/17/52	PROS: DN DM DP DB DWD DWJ WB
	CON: DT DH DW DJ DJC BL WV WNS WT WNY
THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51	PROS: 26 CON: WC WGN NONE: WN MP
MRS. MC THING-2/20/52	PROS: 24 CON: DM DJ BC BL WT WGN
MY DAMELIN' AIDA-10/27/52	PROS: DH DN DC DP DW DB DJC DWS DWW
	CON: DT DM DJ WNS WT WNY WCU WB WV
PAL JOEY-1/3/52	PROS: 28 CON: BL NONE: WNR
NEW FACES OF 1952-5/16/52	PROS: 26 CON: DP WT WGN NONE: WN WNR
POINT OF NO RETURN-12/31/52	PROS: 25 CON: DW BL WN WNR WT
SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49	PROS: 29 CON: WT
TIME OF THE CUCKOO-10/15/52	PROS: 15 CON: DH DM DP DW BL WT
	NONE: WCD WGN WWM WCM WC WNR WNY WSR MP
WISH YOU WERE HERE-6/25/52	PROS: DN DC DB DL DJC WV BL
	CON: 16 NONE: DWW WCD WGN WCM WNR MP

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' Off Broadway '
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The Lambs presented Room Service in Burke Memorial Theatre...Circle in Square will stage duplicate production of Summer and Smoke in Philadelphia Academy starting November 19th...Geraldine Page, who appeared in original Circle production of Summer and Smoke named lead of Lily...Greenwich Mews Theatre to present their long run hit Widowers' Houses on Sundays also...Library Drama Series of Veterans Administration Hospital in Bronx presented Salome with Marion Seldes...American Lyric Theatre making plans to present repertory program on Broadway...Edward Caulfield's First Love, debuted by Journey-men at Provincetown, panned by Rice, Post, mostly because cast wasn't even trying.

' Green Room Department '

FERRER BAN CONDEMNED... British Equity's banning of Jose Ferrer in an Old Vic production is the height of absurdity, pans Baxter, London Evening Standard. There is no question everyone concerned would have benefited by his appearance; Old Vic particularly by finding a new audience. London of all the great capitals of the world can least afford to affront such a distinguished artist. There is still time for Equity to change its stand, he quipped. If they don't they might rename London "Puddington-on-Thames."

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Whatever happened to Committee of Theatrical Producers, asks Variety. Reason why so many show business people get involved in politics every four years, O'brian, Journal American, was informed by an unnamed "old show business statesman," is that most actors have too much time on their hands...Current season belongs, so far, to the actors, rather than the playwrights, notes Watts, Post.

BROOKLYN TALENT... Quarterly roll call of Brooklyn actors on Broadway recorded by Sheaffer Eagle, includes: Wish You Were Here-Sheila Bond, Patricia Marand, Harry Clark and Sammy Smith...Bernardine-Johnny Stewart...In Any Language-Gloria Marlowe...My Darlin' Aida-Elaine Malbin, Dorothy Sarnoff...Gilbert & Sullivan Company-Audrey Dearden.

COLUMN TIPS... TWA's after theatre flight from NY to LA now serves free champagne suppers, reports Wilson...Kilgallen hears: A big time Skylock racket blooming on Broadway with loan sharks preying on young actors; and Tallulah Bankhead is seeking a musical.

AUDITION SUGGESTIONS... Marie Doro recommended for Sybil Thorndike role in NY production of London hit Waters of the Moon by Morehouse, WT&S...Elaine Malbin, My Darlin' Aida, will be a great opera star in the future, predicts Sobol, Journal American, who first "discovered" her seven years ago.

MAIL BOX... Producer Harold Bromley disagrees with J.S.Seidman's Variety letter blaming lack of good plays. Bromley writes in trade journal that backers won't take a chance with plays a producer believes in, because each and every angel feels he is an "expert."

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Vivienne Segal and Harold Lang, Pal Joey leads, agree on everything including medium rare steak, they told Sylvester, News. Neither could explain rumors concerning backstage feuds...Estelle Winwood classifies herself as a "good second part," she explained to Morehouse, WT&S.

' Theatre News Roundup '

American Theatre Wing Symposium Interview of "Drama Desk" features Rice, Post, Hawkins, WT&S, Pihodna, Herald Tribune, Hewes, Saturday Review, Colby, Journal of Commerce, Hassen, Show Business and Kraus, Critical Digest...Shirley Booth, Time of Cuckoo and Michael Brown, New Faces, guests at Woman Pays Club luncheon...Theatre portraits by Louis Lupas shown at "Show Shop"...Lotus Club honored Rodgers and Hammerstein at dinner. Anthony Ross named to replace Walter Matthau, In Any Language, not Lonny Chapman as previously reported...Bob Ritchey, Music Box master carpenter for 31 years, fêted backstage at retirement...Jean Dalrymple elected member of NYC Center board...Louis Verneuil, author of Affairs of State, found dead in his Paris apartment...Playwrights Company and Gilbert Miller sponsoring Kay Ashton-Stevens night ten minute broadcast on WBBM, Chicago. Arthur Cantor first press agent interviewed on WEVD Sunday program...Bill Doll and Abner Klipstein to be heard in succeeding weeks.

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' Digests of Current Reviews '

Dial M for Murder-Plymouth, 10/29/52. It's still unanimous. Weekly reviewers have joined in raves for Frederick Knott new melodrama produced by James P. Sherwood and starring Maurice Evans. Time man called it a welcome visitor, more urban and more ingenious than most. Newsweek reviewer found it fitted the bill for the good thriller Broadway has needed for years. He especially enjoyed John Williams' performance, which he thought on a par with Evans. Keating, Cue, billed it as an intelligent, suspenseful, witty joy which is expertly staged. Gibbs, New Yorker, rated it equal to the best melodramas of recent years. Gusti Huber and Director Reginald Denham shared plaudits. Variety and Billboard critics joined the critical bandwagon.

Frankie and Johnny-Theatre de Lys, 10/27/52-10/28/52. Trade paper reviewers filed reports on one night stand of new Greenwich Village theatre, though other weeklies did not print reviews on William de Lys production of John Huston's folk legend. Gros, Variety, thought evening could have been edited down to an acceptable 15 minute sketch, but was dull in its two act setup. Badly spotted ballet sequences, uninspired score and lack of energy on part of dancers added up to sorry evening. McDonald, Billboard, looking at bright side for a moment, was glad to see the addition of a well appointed house to the Off Broadway circuit, but that the producer spent \$150,000 to do it could only be called a pity. If main production were good, this piece might go as bottom half of a double bill, was Billboard's comment. McDonald hopes the next production, Sodom, Tennessee, now scheduled for December, is better.

My Darlin' Aida-Winter Garden, 10/27/52. Taken as entertaining theatre, Robert L. Joseph's \$300,000 production of Charles Friedman's adaptation of Verdi classic opera didn't impress the weekly reviewers. Though Hobe, Variety, and Keating, Cue, were ready to concede that it might be interesting as opera where plot makes little difference; as theatre they all turned thumbs down. Lemuel Ayers sets and costumes, fine singing by cast headed by Dorothy Sarnoff and Elaine Malbin were lauded by all in spite of the "con" verdicts. Friedman's book, lyrics and original idea were blamed for boring evening. Gibbs, New Yorker, summed up general opinion when he tabbed production a great big beautiful bore. Cue critic felt many talents were wasted in expensive production, pointing out waste of Alonzo Bosan in a walk on part. Francis, Billboard, feared that in spite of gilded frame it all added up to a contrived, corny melodrama.

' Yiddish Theatre Notes '

Uncle Sam in Israel at Public Theatre, Second Avenue, New York City, is not only the best Yiddish play in years, praises Strassberg, Mirror, but production marks another modern, forward looking step in reconstruction of Yiddish theatre.

No knowledge of language is needed to enjoy My Lucky Day musical at the Second Avenue Theatre, okays McDonald, Billboard. Trade paper reporter predicted long run for laugh filled show.

The Devil in Boston, Lion Feuchtwanger's play translated into Yiddish by N. Buchwald and directed by Morris Carnovsky, will be presented by Yiddish Theatre Ensemble at Barbizon Plaza Theatre January 24, 1953.

Yiddish vaudeville presented week ends at Avalon Theatre, Bronx.

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